



# Beyond Tamil: Identifying the Indo-Portuguese layer of Pondicherry French

**Hugo C. Cardoso**  
**Universidade de Lisboa**

**[hcardoso@clul.ul.pt](mailto:hcardoso@clul.ul.pt)**

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# **The Pondicherry *Créoles***

- Pondicherry Eurasians (c. 1000 people);
- Social and linguistic stratification:
  - *Haut Créoles* 'High Creoles': (claimed to be) descendants of Europeans exclusively; speak a variety of French close to Standard French;
  - *Bas Créoles* 'Low Creoles': (claimed to be) descendants of Europeans and Asians; speak a variety of French further from Standard French.



**Earlier known as *Topas***

# Huillet (Jan. 1867)

*[...] elle comprend quatres éléments bien distincts: les Européens et les descendants d'Européens ou Créoles, les Mixtes ou Topas ou gens à chapeaux, provenant du croisement des Européens et principalement des Portugais dont ils parlent encore la langue et portent les noms, avec les femmes indigènes de basse caste. Leur appellation ne vient pas, comme on le croit, de ce qu'ils ont le droit de se vêtir à l'européenne et de porter le chapeau ou "Topi", mais d'après une autre étymologie que m'a communiqué Mr Ferrier, le mot "Topas" qui signifie "Canon" ; en effet, les descendants des Portugais qui étaient de classe mixte furent faits cannoniers sous le gouvernement français d'où "top-ha".*

[The population] comprises four very distinct elements: the Europeans and the descendants of Europeans or Creoles, the Mixed or **Topas** or people in hats, originating from the mixture of Europeans, **especially Portuguese, whose language they still speak and whose names they still bear**, and indigenous women of low caste. Their name doesn't come, as one believes, from their right to dress the European way and wear a hat or "**Topi**", but from another etymology which Mr. Ferrier has explained to me, the word "**Topas**" which means "**Cannon**"; in fact, the descendants of the Portuguese who were of the mixed class were made artillerymen under the French government, hence "**top-ha**".

# Vinson (Aug 24th, 1882)

*[...] Il n'y a point de patois créole dans les établissements français de l'Inde ; on y parle, ou français ou tamoul (c. à d. ou français ou l'idiome du pays). Il ne s'est formé aucun langage mixte, composite, analogue au créole. Quelques mots indiens ont seulement passé dans le langage courant parmi les descendants d'européens et réciproquement. Les mulâtres parlent à peu près tous un dialecte indo-portugais. [...]*

There is no creole *patois* whatsoever in the French establishments of India; there, people speak either French or Tamil (that is, either French or the local language). No mixed or composite language formed analogous to a creole. Just some Indian words entered the language used by the descendants of Europeans, and vice-versa. **Almost all mulattoes speak an Indo-Portuguese dialect.**

# Kelkar-Stephan (2005: 70)

*In the course of the nineteenth century certain 'topa' families managed to get accepted by the 'Creole' society [...]. However, their transition from 'Topas' to being accepted by the 'Creoles' was anything but smooth. They were alienated from the 'White' French-speaking population who did not consider them to be part of their community, due in part to the 'incorrect' French they spoke.*

Language shift from Portuguese (creole) to French  
(19th century)

# **Pondicherry French: Sources**

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# Portuguese lexicon

Word	Meaning	Portuguese etymon
<i>Baffade/Baffat</i>	beef curry with spices and coconut milk	<i>Abafado</i> 'choked, stewed' ?
<i>Cambra</i>	room	<i>Câmara</i> 'room'
<i>Chéga</i>	a dance, also in the Mascarenes islands	<i>Sega</i> 'harvest' ?
<i>Couzide/Kousid</i>	a type of vegetable soup	<i>Cozido</i> 'boiled'
<i>Fé</i>	ugly	<i>Feio</i> 'ugly'
<i>Fougade</i>	sautéed vegetables with shrimp or coconut	<i>Refogado</i> 'stir-fried'
<i>Mestri</i>	chef, mason, craftsman	<i>Mestre</i> 'mason, craftsman'
<i>Pandelo</i>	cake made of cashew nut and sugar	<i>Pão-de-ló</i> 'sponge cake'
<i>Roda</i>	Wheel	<i>Roda</i> 'wheel'
<i>Sapate</i>	shoe	<i>Sapato</i> 'shoe'
<i>Toila</i>	napkin	<i>Toalha</i> 'towel'
<i>Vasi</i>	plate, cup	<i>Vasilha</i> 'water container'
<i>Vindail</i>	a curry made with vinegar	<i>Vinha de alhos</i> 'vinegar and garlic preparation'

# Asian-Portuguese lexicon

Word	Meaning
<i>Cange</i>	tapioca boiled in milk with dried fruits
<i>Dodole/Dodol</i>	cake made of glutinous rice, sugar, butter, cashew nut, coconut milk and cardamom
<i>Kalkal</i>	small biscuit made of flour, eggs and sugar
<i>Molli</i>	a fish dish
<i>Vivika</i>	a cake made of rice paste, sugar and coconut milk



# **Preposition *pour***

- In Pondicherry French, Fr. preposition *pour* introduces:

- a) Indirect objects;
- b) Direct objects;
- c) Non-finite complement clauses.

# 1. Indirect objects

- (1) a. *je le donne pour mon frère.*  
1s.SBJ 3s.OD give.PRS *pour* my brother  
'I give it to my brother.' (Burr 1978: 260 ; adapted)
- b. *donner pour les personnes.*  
give.INF *pour* ART.DEF.PL people  
'To give [it] to the people.' (Kelkar-Stephan 2005: 81)
- c. *Il a donné une robe pour mon fille.*  
3s.SBJ have.PRS.3s give.PTCP one.F dress *pour* my daughter  
'He gave my daughter a dress.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 267)

# 1. Indirect objects

French:

(1) a. - Dative preposition is à:

*je            le            donne    à mon frère.*  
1s.SBJ    3s.OD    give.PRS à my    brother  
‘I give it to my brother.’

b.

*donner    aux                    personnes.*  
give.INF à.ART.DEF.PL people  
‘To give [it] to the people.’

c.

- Some pronouns have special dative forms (e.g. *leur* ‘3p.DAT’).

# 1. Indirect objects

**French:**

- (1) a. - Dative preposition is *à*:

**Tamil:**

- Dative case marker *–ku*, *–(u)kku*, and *–(y)kki* [for recipients, goals of motion, experiencers, standards of comparison, beneficiaries,...]:

<i>kumaar</i>	<i>appaa.v-ukku</i>	<i>oru</i>	<i>kaṭitam</i>	<i>koṭu-tt-aan</i>
Kumar	father-DAT	one	letter	give-PST-3sm

'Kumar gave father a letter.' (Lehmann 1989: 31)

- Some pronouns have special dative forms (e.g. *leur* '3p.DAT').

## 2. Direct objects

- (2) a.    *Le*                      *policier*    *a*                      *arrêté*                      *pour moi.*  
ART.DEF.SG.M    policeman have.PST.3s    arrest.PTCP    *pour* 1s.EM  
'The policeman arrested me.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 207)
- b.        *J'ai*                      *gardé*                      *pour lui*                      *dans*                      *ma maison.*  
1s=have.PRS.1s    keep.PTCP    *pour* 3s.EM    inside    my house  
'I hid [lit. kept] him in my house.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 209)
- c.        *Il*    *obéit*                      *pour son père.*  
3sm obey.PRS.3s    *pour* his    father  
'He obeys his father.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 223)
- d.        *On*                      *a*                      *dit*                      *pour sa mort à*                      *l'église.*  
1p                      have.PRS.3s say.PTCP    *pour* his death LOC    ART=church  
'We announced his death in church.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 210)
- 
- e.        *Il*                      *tire*                      *des*                      *fruits.*  
3s.M                      pluck.PRS.3s                      ART.INDEF.PL                      fruits  
'He plucks fruits.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 214)

## 2. Direct objects

### French:

- (2) a. - Direct objects are most often not introduced by any preposition:
- On a annoncé sa mort à l'église.*  
1p have.PRS.3s announce.PTCP his death LOC ART=church  
b. 'We announced his death in church.'
- Some pronouns have special accusative forms (e.g. *me* '1s.ACC'):
- c. *Le policier m'a arrêté.*  
ART.DEF.SG.M policeman 1s.ACC=have.PST.3s arrest.PTCP  
'The policeman arrested me.'
- d. - A few verbs select a PP. Preposition *à* is especially common:
- Il obéit à son père.*  
3sm obey.PRS.3s à his father  
e. 'He obeys his father.'

## 2. Direct objects

### French:

(2) a.

- Direct objects are most often not introduced by any preposition:

### Tamil:

- Accusative case marker –*ai*–*e*.
- Selection sensitive to animacy and definiteness:

“i) when the object noun phrase is definite, the accusative case suffix is obligatory [...]

ii) when the object noun phrase is indefinite and non-rational and not marked by an indefinite determiner, the noun phrase appears in the nominative [...]

iii) when the object noun phrase is indefinite and non-rational and marked by an indefinite determiner, the accusative case suffix is optional [...]

iv) when the object noun phrase is indefinite and rational, the accusative case suffix is obligatory [...]

 (Lehmann 1989: 29-30)

E.g.:

<i>naan</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>caavi.y-ai.t</i>	<i>tolai-tt-eeṇ</i>
1s	1s-OBL	key-ACC	lose-PST-1s
'I lost the key.' (Lehmann 1989: 28)			

# 3. Non-finite complements

- (3) a. *Il a commencé [pour faire la table].*  
3sm have.PRS.3s start.PTCP *pour* make.INF ART.SG.F table  
'He began to lay the table.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 212)
- b. *Il aime beaucoup [pour jouer au tennis].*  
3sm like.PRS much *pour* play.INF at tennis  
'He loves playing tennis.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 236)
- c. *Je vais [pour voir un mariage].*  
1s go.PRS.1s *pour* see.INF ART.INDEF wedding  
'I'm going to attend a wedding.' (Tirouvanziam-Louis 1994: 236)



# 3. Non-finite complements

French:

(3) a.

- Such complements are normally not preceded by a preposition:

*Il aime beaucoup [jouer au tennis].*  
3sm like.PRS much play.INF at tennis

b.

'He loves playing tennis.'

- With some verbs, a preposition is required, incl. *à* and, in very few cases, *pour*.

c.

*Il a commencé [à dresser la table].*  
3sm have.PRS.3s start.PTCP à set.INF ART.SG.F table  
'He began to lay the table.'

*Jeanne insista [pour venir].*  
Jeanne insist.PST.3s pour come.INF  
'Jeanne insisted on coming.' (Batchelor & Chebli-Saadi 2011: 563)

# 3. Non-finite complements

French:

(3) a.

- Such complements are normally not preceded by a preposition:

Tamil:

- In addition to nominalised complement clauses, Tamil also allows non-finite complements, which simply append to the left of the main verb (no overt subordinator):

<i>kumaar</i>	[ <i>amerikkaa.v-ukku.p</i>	<i>poo.k-a</i>	<i>virumpu-kir-aan</i>
Kumar	America-DAT	go-INF	want-PRS-3sm
'Kumar wants to go to America.' (Lehmann 1989: 253)			

*Jeanne insista*

*pour venir.*

Jeanne insist.PST.3s

*pour* come.INF

'Jeanne insisted on coming.' (Batchelor & Chebli-Saadi 2011: 563)

# The Indo-Portuguese model

- Asian Portuguese-based creoles in general have syncretic dative-accusative [oblique] marking. In South Asia, marker derived from Ptg. preposition *para* 'for' or *por* 'for, by':

- (4)      a.      *Par mi dá ung esmolá.*  
                 OBL 1s give one alms  
                 'Give me alms.' (Nagapattinam; Dalgado 1917: 44)
- b.      *isti kɔvəra-pə je-olha sə...*  
                 this snake-OBL PST-see COND  
                 'If we saw this snake...' (Cochin; Cardoso 2007-2010)
- 
- c.      *dezoytə an ye ali siris je-faze.*  
                 eighteen year 1s there work PST-do  
                 'I did work there for eighteen years.' (Cochin; Cardoso 2007-2010)

# The Indo-Portuguese model

- The Creoles of South India also use a morpheme cognate with the oblique case-marker to introduce non-finite complements:

- (5)      a.      *October-sə    mez-dæ̃trə [vini    pə-fazæ]      lɔ-princəpia.*  
                 october-GEN month-LOC    wine INF-make      IRR-begin  
                 ‘They will start making wine in the month of October.’  
                 (Cannanore; Cardoso 2006-2015; Krajinovic 2015: 55)
- b.      *eli    te-gɔsta      [ungə bicycle pə-tæ].*  
                 3sm IPFV.PRS-like    one    bicycle INF-have  
                 ‘He would like to have a bicycle.’ (Cannanore; Cardoso 2006-  
                 2015; Krajinovic 2015: 55)
- c.      *ki      bɔmba te-gɔsta      [(pə)-kumæ]?*  
                 what much IPFV.PRS-like      INF-eat  
                 ‘What do (you) really like to eat?’ (Cannanore; Cardoso 2006-  
                 2015; Krajinovic 2015: 56)

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